

CORRESPONDENCE.

Some Questions of Nomenclature.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs,—Those of us who have to deal with fine points of scientific nomenclature will always be duly thankful to the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature for the 'Code' which was the result of their first labors, and which has now become the standard not only of our ornithologists and mammalogists but of most other American zoölogists and botanists as well.

Occasionally, however, knotty questions present themselves for which we find no ruling in the Code, and each author is compelled to decide for himself, which results in great diversity of opinion. On some of these questions a careful study of the 'Check-List' shows that the A. O. U. Committee did form their decision, but unfortunately did not include the reasons therefor in the Code, nor give us any of the arguments in the case.

I therefore wish to call especial attention to one or two points in the hope that we may come to a little more definite understanding of them and perhaps elicit an explanation from the A. O. U. Committee giving the reasons for their rulings.

The first question is in regard to the quotation of authorities for manuscript names.

For instance, an author, Smith, discovers a new bird for which he proposes a name and prepares a description, then finding that another author, Jones, is about to publish a paper on allied birds, he sends his manuscript for Jones to incorporate in his paper. Or perhaps Smith merely sends a specimen bearing the new name which he would propose and calls attention to its most distinctive characters, leaving Jones to prepare the description in his own words. In either case Jones gives Smith credit for the new species by placing his name after the scientific name as authority for it. Now the question is, are we in quoting the name to cite Smith, the *author* of the species, or Jones the publisher of it, as our authority.

Those who would quote Jones claim that the first one to publish a diagnosis of the species is the author to be quoted, because until the description is published the name is a *nomen nudum*, and that the author of the manuscript name is not authority for the description published by the other. Furthermore, by quoting the author of the MS. name we give no clue to the place of publication, which is one of the principal reasons for quoting an authority.

On the other hand, it is claimed that we have no right to ignore the author of the MS. name, as he really recognized the species as new and deserves the 'credit'; moreover, the author who published the description

(Jones) distinctly disclaimed credit for the species by quoting 'Smith' along with the scientific name at the head of the description.

The mere question of 'credit' is of but little importance to my mind, for more real 'credit' belongs to the man who prepares a good monograph of a group whether he hands his name down to posterity as a sort of caudal appendage to a lot of new species or not. A form warranting description should be described by all means, but this is not the end of zoölogical science, as some seekers after new species seem to think.

If both sides were consistent in the above argument we might decide in favor of one or the other, but they are not.

So far as my experience goes representatives of both sides recognize two classes of MS. names. (1) In which Smith prepares the entire diagnosis as well as proposes the name and Jones prints the whole bodily in his paper. (2) Where Smith has merely attached his new name to a specimen and called attention to some of its characters, leaving Jones to prepare the diagnosis.

In case (2) the advocates of the publisher as the authority to be cited quote Jones, but in case (1) I find most of them would quote Smith.

Now for my part I fail to see how we can in practice draw a line between these two classes of MS. names, and how we are to tell which author had the most to do with framing a description.

Moreover, inclined though I am to the citing of the publisher of the name, I do not think that the MS. author can be wholly ignored where all the work is his and where the publisher has merely acted as editor for him, and distinctly disowns the species as his own. Such action would cause the greatest overthrow of authorities in invertebrate zoölogy where MS. names are much more frequent.

The clearest way out of the difficulty seems to me to be the quotation of both authors in all cases thus: "Smith" Jones,¹ which indicates exactly the status of the authority and is very little more trouble to write. This practice, too, will be much more likely to be generally adopted than the citation of either name separately, especially in view of the great diversity of opinion which now exists among zoölogists in general.

The action of the A. O. U. Committee in regard to this question is interesting and further illustrates the diversity of opinion, at the same time showing how unstable the authorities quoted in our list are likely to be. In the first edition of the Check-List there are some twenty instances of 'MS.' names; in four of these the Committee decided to adopt as authority the name of the author who published the description, while in all the rest they ruled in favor of the author of the MS. name. The latter seemed to be their general rule while the first four cases were regarded as pure *nomina nuda* before the descriptions appeared. In some

¹ I do not claim any originality in suggesting this form of citation, as I am well aware that it has been often used. I merely advocate this form as preferable to either name separately or to such a form as, Smith MS. Jones.

of the latter, however (especially *Rallus saturatus* "Hensh."), it is hard to see where the author of the MS. name had any claim over those of the first four cases.

In the Supplements to the Check-List the Committee continued to rule in favor of the author of the MS. name, but in the new edition which has just appeared they reversed their ruling, changing the authorities for a number of names, and have almost universally ignored the MS. author and quoted the publisher.¹ In two instances, however, the 'MS. author' still receives recognition, *v. g.*, *Pipilo chlorurus* (Townsend) and *Otocoris alpestris pallida* Townsend.

The first of these is described as *Fringilla chlorura* in Audubon's Orn. Biog., V, p. 336. The entire description is a quotation from a letter of Dr. J. K. Townsend, but the name is not credited to him and is not in quotation marks: it is clearly Audubon's and without it the description would have no status. Ord, in Guthrie's 'Geography,' gave names to descriptions in the History of Lewis and Clarke's Expedition, and we do not quote Lewis and Clarke; so far as I see the two cases are parallel.

Otocoris alpestris pallida was discovered, described and named by Mr. C. H. Townsend, and I presume his manuscript was in the U. S. Government Printing Office early in 1890, or perhaps before. However, Mr. Townsend lent his type to Dr. Dwight when he was preparing his monograph of the American Horned Larks, and another description was prepared and printed in Dr. Dwight's paper (Auk, April, 1890, p. 154).

Mr. Townsend's description did not appear till September, 1890 (judging from the date on which the paper was distributed). Dr. Dwight very properly disclaimed any credit for the name and gave it as "Townsend MS.," and in the A. O. U. Check-List it is credited to Townsend.

The reference, moreover, is that of Townsend's publication (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 1890, p. 138), and Dr. Dwight's apparently earlier publication is ignored. While I do not begrudge Mr. Townsend his Lark, and would still give him full credit for it on the plan advocated above, I fail to see why the Committee should make this special ruling.

While discussing the rulings in the new Check-List I would like to call attention to one or two instances which I take to be typographical errors, though perhaps there may be some reasons for them that I have overlooked.

No. 13a. *Fratercula arctica glacialis* (Temm.) is printed identically in the two editions, but the reference to Temmink's work is omitted in the new edition, and Stephens, Gen. Zoöl. 1826, given as the place of original publication; should not the authority be changed to Stephens?

An exactly similar case is 766a. *Sialia sialis azurea*, still credited to "Swains.," though the place of original publication is changed to "Baird, Rev. Am. B., July, 1884, p. 62." and no reference to Swainson appears.

¹This makes Gambel the authority for *Callipepla gambelii* or indicates that he named the bird after himself, which he certainly did not intend to do!

Another point is in regard to quoting the authority for species described in the 'Fauna Boreali-Americana.'

The A. O. U. Committee has evidently decided to quote the author whose initials appear at the head of the description immediately following the scientific name instead of the two authors jointly. *Oidemia americana*, however, is still credited to "Sw. and Rich.," although it is Swainson's species and no reference to Richardson occurs in connection with it. Two other species, *Lagopus leucurus* and *Larus franklinii*, credited to "Sw. and Rich.," are still regarded as of joint authorship though both could easily be credited to Richardson without stretching rulings applied in other cases.

The other main point to which I wish to call attention is one of priority. Two names are proposed in the same volume for the same animal, one having priority of nineteen pages. Several specialists claim that in such a case the next writer to revise the group to which the animal belongs has the right to adopt either name he chooses, and subsequent writers should follow him. I should like to know if such a ruling is in accordance with views of the A. O. U. Committee. To me the priority of a few pages seems to warrant the adoption of the first name just as much as priority of a few years, or, as it has been happily put, "in case of twins, primogeniture rules."

I was impelled to call especial attention to the main points discussed in this letter by the question of the proper name for the Polar Hare recently agitated by Mr. S. N. Rhoads (see Amer. Nat., 1896, p. 251), and I am indebted to this gentleman for the use of some letters from specialists bearing upon the matter.¹

The citation of this case, with the opinions of various specialists, will further illustrate the different views that are held in regard to these questions. Ross published a description of the Polar Hare in his 'Voyage,' Appendix IV, p. 151, giving it the name "*Lepus arcticus* Leach," implying that Dr. Leach had recognized the species as new and had proposed this name for it. Farther on in Appendix No. IV is a more minute account by Dr. Leach of the animals collected; here (p. 170) he describes the Polar Hare, giving it the name *Lepus glacialis*, having apparently changed his mind as to what he would call it since communicating with Ross.

Sabine, Baird and others chose to adopt *Lepus glacialis* Leach for the animal, but now Mr. Rhoads advocates *Lepus arcticus* on account of priority and would quote as authority "Leach" Ross in accordance with the suggestion given above in this letter.

In answer to inquiries the following gentlemen have given their opinions as below in regard to which name and authority they would quote.

¹ The permission to publish their opinions was courteously granted by the gentlemen mentioned below, to whom I am also indebted.

Lepus arcticus Ross.

Dr. L. Stejneger.

Dr. T. S. Palmer.

Lepus glacialis Leach.

Dr. C. Hart Merriam.

Mr. Gerrit S. Miller, Jr.

Lepus arcticus Leach, Ross.

Dr. Theo. Gill.

Lepus arcticus "Leach" Ross.

Prof. H. A. Pilsbry.

Mr. S. N. Rhoads.

Mr. Witmer Stone.

If only one authority is to be quoted Dr. Gill and Prof. Pilsbry would adopt *Lepus arcticus* Leach, and Mr. Miller, if deciding the case first hand (without regard to Baird, Sabine, etc.), would adopt *Lepus arcticus* Ross.

Finally, I must apologize for using so much of your valuable space, but feel that these questions should be brought into prominent notice, for while they do not appeal to the field ornithologist, they must have presented themselves to every systematist who has had occasion to discuss points of nomenclature.

Very truly yours,

WITMER STONE.

Acad. Nat. Sciences, Phila.,

March 3, 1896.

[Mr. Stone, in a private letter accompanying the above, has kindly suggested my following his communication with such remarks as may seem to me pertinent. In doing so I wish to be understood as writing for myself alone and not in behalf of or by the authority of the A. O. Committee on Nomenclature, although what I say in reference to the points raised by Mr. Stone is, I believe, strictly in line with the decisions of the Committee.

First in regard to MS. names, or Mr. Stone's 'Smith and Jones' case. As Mr. Stone has shown, there are two well-defined classes of manuscript names. There are also cases which do not clearly come under either.

1. Under class 1 we may place (a) names borne on the label of a museum specimen, or (b) transmitted by means of a labelled specimen from one naturalist to another. Out of courtesy, or for some other reason no more obligatory, Jones, the publishing author, adopts Smith's name and writes after it 'Smith MS.' In this case Jones is the authority for the name, and Smith gets his 'credit' for his discovery, which will appear to the end of time in every full citation of the bibliography of the species.

The justness of this is easily demonstrated. Jones is the responsible party in the case. He is the arbiter as to whether Smith's supposed new species is really tenable. In case he finds it a 'good species' he is at

liberty to adopt Smith's name or not, as he chooses. If he finds Smith's species is not a 'good species' it is his duty to suppress it altogether, thus doing Smith the kindness of concealing his mistake, and benefiting science by suppressing a synonym.

2. Under class 2 we may place MS. names, transmitted from one naturalist to another, accompanied with a diagnosis. Jones, the publishing author, receives from Smith not only a labelled specimen, but a diagnosis of the new species it is supposed to represent. Jones publishes the name and the diagnosis as inedited matter, credited to Smith, with such additional comment as he sees fit, endorsing or discrediting the species as his judgment may dictate. In this case Smith is the author and Jones merely the vehicle of publication, and the citation will be "Smith, in Jones, etc." (= title of the publication). Or, as sometimes happens, instead of transmitting specimens, Smith may send merely the name and diagnosis for incorporation in Jones's monograph; in which case, or in either case, Jones's responsibility for Smith's species extends only so far as relates to his good judgment in accepting Smith's matter for publication.

On this supposition, Jones publishes Smith's diagnosis as well as his name, and both in such a way as to indicate Smith's authorship. Should Jones fail to do this, and there is nothing to show Smith's claim, we can recognize only the ostensible author; the equity of the case is purely a personal matter between Smith and Jones.

In certain cases one may have reason to suppose that the author of the MS. name furnished something more than a MS. name attached to a specimen,—in fact in rare instances many know this to be the case: but it would be fatal to stability in the matter of authorities for names if we allowed such knowledge or conviction to supercede what the record shows on its face, since this alone is the evidence open equally to every one.

All cases of MS. names should be placed under one or the other of the two classes already defined, but the decision may be less easy in some cases than in others. An instance in point is the case of "*Fringilla chlorura* Towns", in Aud. Orn. Biog., etc., cited above by Mr. Stone. It is evident that all Audubon knew of the bird was derived from the account furnished him in a letter by Mr. Townsend; the whole account, except the name, is given as a quotation from Townsend. Townsend may have given it the name also, but of this there is no proof. The name as it stands is ostensibly Audubon's. Yet all subsequent writers have attributed it to Townsend, and apparently the A. O. U. Committee followed custom without subjecting the case to special scrutiny. Now that my attention is specially drawn to it, I see no way of escaping the decision that, in strict accordance with the rule applied in other cases in the revised edition of the Check-List, the name is Audubon's, and the citation should be *Fringilla chlorura* Audubon.

In the case of "*Otocoris alpestris pallida* Townsend," it seems unavoidable to accept Mr. Stone's correction, as Dr. Dwight's paper was published

about April 1, 1890, and Mr. Townsend's, as shown by the official list of dates of publication of the articles in Vol. XIII of the Proceedings of the U. S. National Museum (see p. viii of this volume), not until Sept. 9, 1890. Yet Dr. Dwight says Mr. Townsend "has recently described a race from Lower California and kindly permitted me to examine his type," being under the impression, doubtless, that Mr. Townsend's paper was already in press. The facts in the case as now developed render it evident that the correct citation is: *Otocoris alpestris pallida* Dwight (ex Townsend MS.). Auk, VII, April, 1890, p. 154.

In the first edition of the A. O. U. Check-List, as Mr. Stone has pointed out, there was lack of uniformity in the treatment of MS. names, as also in a few other nomenclatural matters, defects it was sought to remedy in the second edition; but, as in all things of human origin, there is lack of perfection even in the revised edition, but the inconsistencies are few and wholly accidental.

The case of "*Fratercula arctica glacialis* (Temm.)," as it appears in the revised edition, is a puzzle. Obviously if the amended reference is correct, "Stephens" should replace "Temm.," as the authority for the name *glacialis*. On reinvestigation, however, it turns out that the change introduced in the revised edition was uncalled for and erroneous, the original edition being correct.¹

As regards "*Sialia azurea* Swain.," the name as used by Swainson "is a complete *nomen nudum*" (cf. Ridgw., Man. N. Am. Birds, p. 581, first footnote), and was first coupled with a description by Baird in 1864. Therefore the authority is Baird and not Swainson.

In regard to the 'Fauna Boreali-Americana,' it was the ruling of the Committee that the author of the species, whether Swainson or Richardson, or the two authors jointly, should be cited as the authority for the name, each case to be determined on its merits by the evidence afforded by the text. But the evidence is not always clear, so that different authorities might decide the same case differently. In the case of new species either Richardson's or Swainson's name is usually given as the authority. In the case of *Lagopus leucurus*, "Swains." is given as the authority for the name, but the description is signed "R." So it was deemed proper to cite both Swainson and Richardson as the authority.

The authority for *Larus franklinii* is "nobis"; the text is signed "R.,"

¹Temminck says: "On doit observer de ne pas confondre notre *Mormon fratercula* [= *Fratercula arctica* (Linn.)] avec une espèce propre aux côtes septentrionales d'Amérique, dont le plumage est absolument semblable, mais qui a la bec beaucoup plus haut, elle a surtout la mandibule inférieure très-arquée; cette espèce nouvelle est indiquée par le docteur Leach, sous le nom de *Mormon glacialis*" (Man. d'Orn. sec. éd., II, 1820, p. 933). On reference to Stephens it becomes evident that Dr. Leach's name was merely a museum manuscript name, whence both Temminck and Stephens obtained it.

but one of the footnotes is signed "Sw.," and the diagnosis is not signed (as it is in some other cases, but not in all).

In the case of "*Oidemia americana* Sw. and Rich.," the proper authority is obviously Swainson, and that it was not so printed in the revised Check-List is clearly due to oversight.

In regard to the priority of names published in the same volume, Mr. Stone will find this point treated under Canon XVII of the A. O. U. Code, to the effect that of names of equal pertinency, "that is to be preferred which stands first in the book."

As to the case of *Lepus arcticus*, I should agree with Mr. Rhoads and write *Lepus arcticus* Ross, or, in making a full or formal citation, *Lepus arcticus* "Leach" Ross. *Lepus glacialis* is clearly untenable, *arcticus* having precedence of 19 pages in the same volume. Even if Leach imparted the name *arcticus* to Ross, he had no right to change it later on the ground that he preferred *glacialis*, since "an author has no right to change or reject names of his own proposing, except in accordance with rules of nomenclature governing all naturalists" (cf. A. O. U. Code, Canon XXXV). The case of *Lepus arcticus* Ross, therefore, rests entirely on the adequacy of Ross's accompanying description, which, if sufficient (I have not the description at hand), clearly renders the name *glacialis* untenable.¹—J. A. ALLEN.]

A Question of Nomenclature.

TO THE EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs,—The publication by Mr. Anthony, in the January number of 'The Auk,' of a new subspecies of *Dryobates*, under the appellation *Dryobates villosus montanus*, involves a principle of nomenclature in regard to which it may be profitable to invite the opinions of systematists, and upon which a decision by the A. O. U. Committee seems desirable.

Picus montanus of Brehm (Vögel Deutschlands, 1831, p. 189) is now relegated to the synonymy of *Dendrocopos* (= *Dryobates*) *major* (Linn.); and the question arises whether or not the specific term *montanus* is available for further employment in the genus *Dryobates*. Canon XXXIII of the A. O. U. Code, which is presumed to provide for such contingencies reads: ". . . a specific or subspecific name is to be changed when it has been applied to some other species of the same genus, or used previ-

¹ Professor Baird (Mam. N. Am., 1857, p. —) says he does not see why the name *arcticus* Ross is not tenable, having priority, but not being able to consult the work in question he follows Sabine in the use of *glacialis* Leach. I find that in 1877, with the work before me, I gave precedence to *arcticus* Ross.